Colchester Public Schools

RECOMMENDED NEW POLICY/REGULATION
Based on Statutory changes in Ct Public Act 21-46

3542.43P

BUSINESS/NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS

FOOD SERVICE CHARGING POLICY

The Colchester Public School District recognizes the important link between proper nutrition and academic success. The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent district procedure for charging meals when students do not have money to pay, preventing meal charges, and ensuring eligible children are certified for free and reduced-price school meals.

Charging Meals
Schools ~~can~~ will allow students to charge reimbursable meals up to a certain number of meals or dollar amount and then provide an alternate meal after that. ~~Schools can offer students unable to pay a regular menu meal or a lower-cost The alternative meal shall~~ meet nutritional standards, but will not overtly identify children.

It is the right of all students to purchase one meal, which may exclude a la carte items, for any school breakfast, lunch, or other feeding.

Preventing Meal Charges
To ensure that all eligible families are certified for free and reduced-price school meals, the school nutrition department shall:

- provide all households with school meal applications prior to the start of the school year and/or include instructions for completing online school meal applications;
- provide school meal applications in the primary language of the parent or guardian and provide assistance with completing an application for any household that requests assistance;
- promptly utilize data provided by the state or other school district officials to certify eligible children without an application; and
- assure that any child for which the school district is not able to obtain a completed school meal application, but becomes aware of their eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals shall be certified based on an application submitted by the appropriate school official, as permitted by USDA guidance.

Communication of Food Service Charging
Colchester Public Schools employees and vendors are expressly prohibited from publicly identifying or shaming a child for unpaid charges by delaying or refusing to serve a meal to the child, designating a specific meal for the child, or taking any disciplinary action against the child.

Communication regarding collection of a child's unpaid meal charges will be directly with parents or caregivers; no such information will be shared with the child. Such communication will contain information on local food pantries, applications for free or reduced-price meals and the Department of Social Services' supplemental nutrition assistance program, and a link to the school district's website that lists any community services available to Colchester residents.

If a child's unpaid meal charges equal or exceed the cost of 30 meals, the district will refer the child's parent or caregiver to the district's homeless education liaison and/or youth and family services. Under the Act, boards of education are authorized to accept gifts, donations, or grants to pay unpaid meal charges, subject to policies and procedures in place to ensure nondiscrimination.

Delinquent Debt
Unpaid meal charges, like any other money owed to the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA), are considered "delinquent debt" when payment is overdue, as defined by state or local policies. Effective with school year 2017-2018, the Connecticut State Department of Education requires that the parent;/guardian pay all delinquent student debts no later than June 30th to ensure that students' accounts have a zero balance for the start of the next school year.

Any delinquent debts that have not been recovered by June 30th will be considered "bad debt." Records relating to those charges must be maintained in accordance with the records retention requirements in 7 CFR 210.9(b)(17) and 7 CFR 210.15(b).

The Chief Financial Officer shall be notified annually in June by the cafeteria supervisor of delinquent debt associated with the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA)

This regulation shall be placed on the District's website and the website of each school, and will be published at the beginning of each school year at the time information is distributed regarding free and reduced price meals.

Debt Resolution
School nutrition services revenue may not be used to subsidize unpaid meal debt.

Legal References

Connecticut General Statutes
10-215 Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees.

10-215a Nonpublic school and nonprofit agency participation in feeding programs.
10-215b Duties of State Board of Education re feeding programs.

State Board of Education Regulations

State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education Operational Memorandum No. 4-17, "Guidance on Unpaid Meal Charges and Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments," Nov. 2, 2016
Operational Memorandum #19-10, State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education "Unallowable Charges to No-profit School Food Service Accounts and the Serving of Meals to No-paying Full and Reduced Price Students"
National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program; Competitive Foods. (7 CFR Parts 210 and 220, Federal Register, Vol 45 No. 20, Tuesday, January 29, 1980, pp 6758-6772

USDA Guidance:

SP 46-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies"
SP 47-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payment"
SP 57-2016 "Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q and A"
SP 58-2016 "2016 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools"

ADOPTED:	June 14, 2011
REVISED:	November 14, 2017
REVISED:	January 14, 2020
REVISED:	**December 14, 2021**

COLCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Colchester, Connecticut

EXISTING CPS POLICY:

~~The Board of Education has an agreement with the Connecticut State Department of Education to participate in the school-based Child Nutrition Program. The Board accepts full responsibility for adhering to the federal and state guidelines and regulations pertaining thereto. Program meals are planned to meet the specified nutrient standards for children as specified by the United States Department of Agriculture in accordance with their age or grade group.~~

~~Although not required by law, but due to its participation in the Child Nutrition Program, the Board approves the establishment of a system to permit students to charge a meal in certain situations.~~

~~The Board realizes that funds from the non-profit School Food Service Account, according to federal regulations, cannot be used to cover the cost of charged meals that have not been paid.~~

~~Federal funds are intended to subsidize the meals of children, and these funds may not be used to subsidize meals for teachers, staff or visitors. Therefore, adults are not permitted to charge meals.~~

~~Families are able to pre-pay for meals to help ensure children have consistent access to healthy meals.~~

~~Charging is not encouraged by the Board, but on those occasions that a student does not have lunch money, s/he will be permitted to charge a reimbursable meal or be offered an alternate meal. An alternate meal is any meal that differs from the day's advertised, reimbursable meal. An alternate meal is a cheese sandwich and milk.~~

EXISTING CPS REGULATION:

3542.43P

BUSINESS/NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS

FOOD SERVICE CHARGING ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION

The Board's regulations regarding meal charging are as follows.

1. The student who charges a meal will be given the same reimbursable meal that other children are provided. Allowable number of charged lunches are:
    a. K-2: five
    b. 3-5: three
    c. 6-12: one
2. The School Food Service program will inform secondary level students verbally when they have a low account balance, or when they have charged a lunch. Ala carte menu items cannot be charged.
3. Parents of elementary school students who charge will be notified by a letter given to the student by her/his classroom teacher or by telephone that their child has received charged meals. Middle and high school students' parents will receive notification by U.S. mail, email, and/or phone.
4. After a student has reached the allowable number of charged lunches, the School Food Service will provide an alternate meal.
5. Alternate meals will be provided until all charged amounts, including the costs for alternate meals, are paid.
6. In the event of hardship situations, parents/guardians will be encouraged to contact the Board's Cafeteria Supervisor or school social worker to discuss application for free or reduced price meals.

School administrators and cafeteria managers are expected to ensure that no student is exposed to distress as a result of not having adequate funds to pay for a meal. Actions such as publicizing the names of children with unpaid meal charges or any other form of identifying a child who has charged a meal are strictly prohibited.

All correspondence and communication related to unpaid meal charges will be addressed with the student's parents or guardians. School personnel should not attempt to resolve unpaid charges directly with children.

When a child leaves the district or graduates, the Cafeteria Supervisor must attempt to contact the child's parent or guardian in writing to return any funds remaining in the student's account. Families who are not approved for free and reduced lunch may donate the funds to cover unpaid meal charges that were not collectible. If the parent/guardian does not respond to the written notice within 30 days the funds will be donated to cover unpaid meal charges.

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REGULATION ADOPTED: November 14, 2017

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